

Dragon Fire Development

PICATINNY, N.J. -- Dragon Fire, a highly automated 120mm rifled mortar system capable of remote operation by mortar crews, is under development for the Marine Corps by the Program Executive Office for Ammunition and Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center at Picatinny.

According to Tony Franchino, one of the leaders of the program's development team, Dragon Fire is a candidate for the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Fire Support System. It can be towed by a light armored vehicle or HMMWV or loaded into a CH-53 helicopter or an MV22 Osprey.

It is one of several concepts being considered by the Marine Corps for the EFSS, he said.

"Dragon Fire is the first system to incorporate an automated fire and gun control system an indirect fire mortar system," he said.



"This is significant because it increases the fire response time, reduces crew size, allows the crew to operate the system remotely from a covered, secure position, and improves firing accuracy."

"The weapon receives a fire mission digitally, calculates the ballistic solution and automatically points and fires."

Ted Greiner, the program's other team lead, said the next version of Dragon Fire, already under development here, will incorporate a new mortar fire control system that Picatinny is developing for the Army.

"The Mortar Fire Control System (MFCS) will improve the performance and accuracy of the system and is 100% backward compatible with the U.S. Army," he explained. "The only differences will be the addition of mission sets specific to the USMC and a sophisticated gun control capability."

Franchino and Greiner said that the next generation Dragon Fire will be smaller and approximately 3000 lbs. lighter than its predecessor.

It also will incorporate a more advanced fire and gun control system, which will make the system more responsive and automatically load and fire both rifled and smoothbore ammunition. The current version can fire smoothbore ammunition, but the smooth bore ammunition must be hand loaded because the loading device cannot handle smoothbore ammunition.

Automated loading and firing allows the crew to remotely operate the system from a covered, secured location while providing responsive, accurate indirect fire support.

The Dragon Fire is designed to fill a void in the Marine Corps inventory for a mid-range fire support weapon system.